Aqua

1st Edition

SU4IP△((•))

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Not just

When it comes to elements that bring humans together, can any contend with water? Everything we understand depends on this precious resource in some way. Hydration, food, hygiene, materials, transport, and enrichment would all collapse without it. Water is a hub for all aspects of life, and cannot be understated.

This publication curates the work of creatives who evaluate and engage with water on a granular level. Highlighting their concerns, feelings, memories, aspirations, and more in relation to this huge topic.

The way in which art can incorporate themes, ideas, or visuals of water allows important considerations to bubble to the surface in profound and beautiful ways. Therefore, *Aqua* is not just a book about water; instead, it is a crucial insight into all aspects of being human, and how we occupy our planet.

Artistically reconstructing the landscape of our minds, natural geography, or any combination of the two can be approached in endless ways. In doing so, we can appreciate diverse applications of materials to replicate both lived and dreamt experiences, and explore spaces in between.

The abundance of water is both a strength and a weakness. Access to it is essential, yet the vastness of it allows for complacency. A bottle cap here, a bicycle there; it's easy to assume that compared to the scale of what is being discarded, disposing of something in a large body of water is a relatively insignificant offence. Unfortunately, this rhetoric has been used on a scale far beyond what we can comprehend. As a result, we continue to poison a resource on which all life depends in the name of convenience, disregard, or economic gain. Art is a tool that brings light to injustice, and this matter is no exception.

about water.

Crisis cannot be addressed without a strong sense of who we are, which is mostly water. We control the means to address our own physical nature, appearance, and composition; it is art, combined with great sensitivity, care, and emotion, that creates a space in which we can all engage in mutual reflection and common cause.

As we change, so does our relationship with water. At an unprecedented rate, we are both advancing and surpassing ways in which we use and interact with it. In turn, we are able to appreciate modern conventions, while looking back at times gone by with great fondness. Art is a medium capable of conveying and illustrating our memories, thoughts, ideas, and play; to nourish our current understanding, and inform future generations.

Overleaf, thirty-one artists capture aqua in numerous ways. Water is everything we understand, and thus, any art in relation to water is about so much more. I wish to express my sincere thanks to all of the infinitely talented individuals for contributing their time, works, and input into producing this publication. I hope that you derive as much joy from exploring its pages as I did putting them together.

Lyndon Watkinson

SU4IP

06 Alisher Ilkhamov

Alisher Ilkhamov is an emerging artist specialising in photography and digital art. Since his relatively recent entry into the art scene, he has already participated in several exhibitions. Most recently, in a solo exhibition at the Willesden Gallery, London.

Alisher's creative process, which he refers to as *2D Ikebana*, involves photographing fragments of nature—primarily individual branches and leaves—and refining them in Photoshop. By removing extraneous details, he transforms the original photographs into thematic compositions.

What space does your art occupy in contemporary art?

I strive to work at the intersection of Western and Eastern artistic traditions, more specifically, the heritage of Chinese and Japanese fine art, as well as the Eastern (Muslim) miniatures. 2D Ikebana seeks to remove unnecessary details from my original photographs and isolate the beauty of selected elements. In rare cases, retrofitting details drawn from my other images.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

I almost exclusively work in digital art. In the past, after a plein air session, I would return with one or two sketches. Now, through photography, I can collect a large set of material, from which I can select the most interesting ones. In this way, digital art accelerates the collection of primary material, providing a broader range of fragments to work with when creating compositions.

I am originally from Uzbekistan, one of the post-Soviet Central Asian republics, and I moved to the UK in 2004. Although Uzbekistan is a Muslim-majority country, I have admired Western art since my school days, particularly Impressionism and Post-Impressionism after visiting art museums in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Additionally, the art museums in Tashkent and Nukus house extensive collections of Central Asian avant-garde that have been highly influential. My interest in Western art deepened through visits to leading museums in Europe and the USA. My appreciation for Eastern artistic traditions developed much later, inspired by exploring the collections at institutions such as the British Museum and the V&A Museum.

(left) *The Discord of Gathering*, Photography & Digital Art, 12 x 12 in., 2024.
(below) *Whispers of the Past*, Photography & Digital Art, 12 x 16 in., 2024

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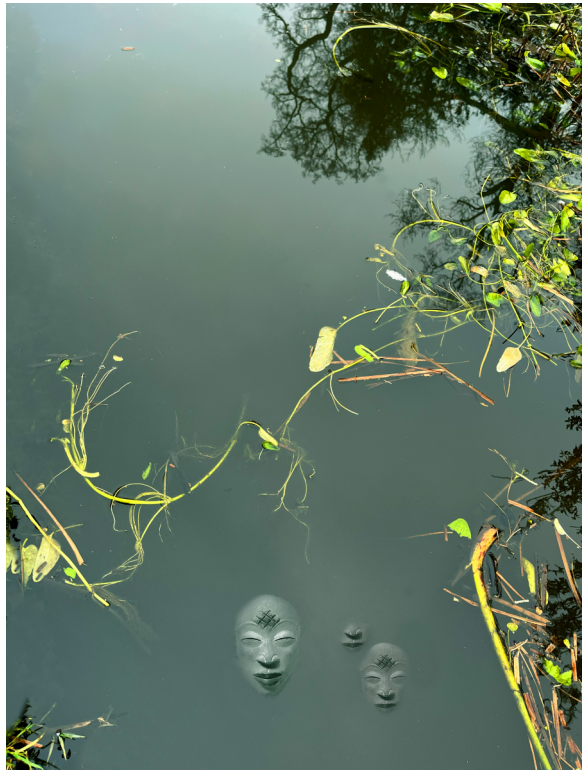
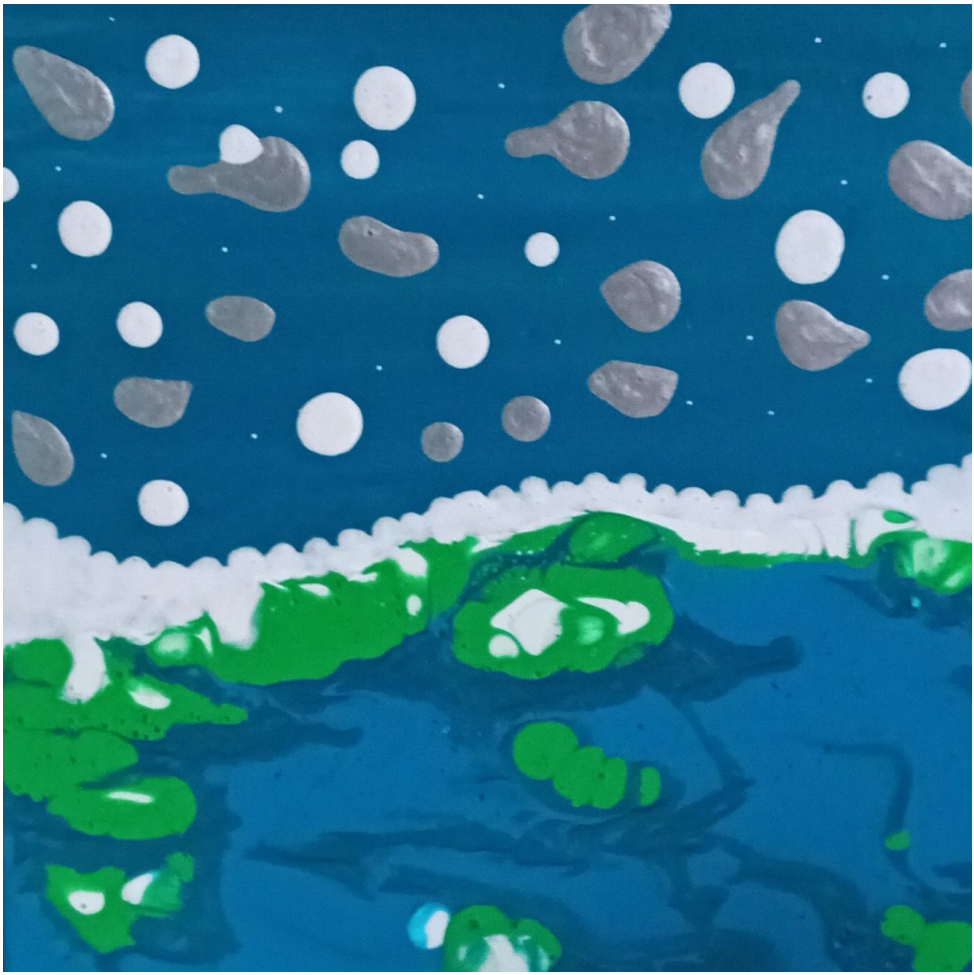


08 Laura Marie Doore

Laura Marie Doore is an artistic moonraker whose style interchanges between abstract and illustration. Driven by a once stifled need for self-expression, she applies an intuitive, yet meditative style to predominantly mixed-media works combining paint and marker pens.

Throughout her life, art has provided her with an escape from the real world, as well as a vehicle to express herself. For Doore, art has become something of a second language.

Across the Pond and Back Again, Acrylic on Canvas, 20 x 20 cm, 2024



"Across the Pond and Back Again is a paint pour series, depicting a vast pond with lilypads scattered across the top. It was a happy accident that it turned out this way, as it was originally meant to be an image of earth, land, and sky. The thing about paint pouring is that the liquid guides itself across the canvas, which I find quite poetic."

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

When I was a child, at an age where I was still learning to walk, I went to the beach with my parents. The beach was covered in sharp shells that sliced my feet. I called out to my dad to help, who told me to wash clean my wounds in the sea. I stood watching the waves glisten as they came towards me. It was so beautiful, yet my feet stung so much. I was stuck. Which is ironic, because now I mentally go there to calm myself.

What is the biggest challenge of being an artist, and how do you address it?

Self-doubt and the doubt of others. As a person that grew up relatively uneducated and poor, with many challenges to face the majority of my life. I've been judged as a result, and this brings a dip in self-confidence. Speaking to others has made me realise I don't need to see any of my "negative markers" as complete full stops; it's only a matter of looking for another way of achieving that dream.

What is the role of an artist in society, and why is it important?

I think the role of an artist is the same: whether it be painting, acting, music, or dancing—we are storytellers. I used to believe art held no place in the world, but I see now that it can be used to convey emotion and reflect the times we live in.

Instagram: @lmdooreart

10 James Verity

James Verity creates work that aims to connect with audiences on a deeply personal and emotional level; having been profoundly influenced by mental illness throughout their life, they seek to express these experiences through art, employing the creative process as a form of therapy.

Hand-building techniques often characterise Verity's pots and sculptures, which utilise the 16th-century Japanese art of Raku for their firing process. The sculptures serve as visual representations of mental illness symptoms, such as emotional overwhelm, depression, and despair.

> *"Piece Number One was designed to explore the visual theme of water running down the rugged mountainside. I scraped glaze off areas periodically to explore this. Piece Number Two stands like a rock on the shoreline, with the waves running down as the storm hits."*

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

My earliest memory of water is from when I was a small child. The dog ran out into the sea at the beach. Worried for him, I ran in after him. The outgoing wave lifted me off my feet, and just as I felt myself being swept out to sea, I felt my dad's arms wrap round me and pull up and back to safety. I reflect on this now, and it makes me reflect on the beauty and danger of water. The dog was fine.

Does art help you address other areas of your life?

Creating with clay has soothed my mental health and anxiety. As someone who has ADHD, it's incredibly difficult to be still, and I feel the need to constantly be doing something with my hands. I find the slow and reflective process of shaping, drying, carving, hollowing, and glazing soothing for the soul.

Who or what inspires you?

My work is inspired by those who externalise their internal pain, agony, and suffering—artists or not. I strongly resonate with Francis Bacon. His abstract figures, which are both human and inhuman, speak of the same pain, frustration, and isolation I have come to understand. The existential crises of these subjects are almost turning them inside out. Like Francis, I try to observe the vulnerable and darker aspects of the human condition.

What's the end goal of your work?

It's important for me that this specific collection is perceived as a collective piece, with each individual component experiencing their individual crises. My hope and wish is that someone out there feels a deep connection to one of them. If just one person who views my work says something like, "I get that. That's me now, or was me back then." Then it will have done its job.

(above, left to right) *Piece Number One*, Ceramic Sculpture, 10 x 8 cm, 2024

Piece Number Two, Ceramic Sculpture, 10 x 8 cm, 2024

Instagram:
@jamesverityceramics

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theaccidentalpotter.etsy.com

12 Anna Kaesser

With a documentary approach to photography, Anna focuses on telling stories through her images, exploring how photography can influence the public through both traditional and social media. She believes in the power of photos to capture real moments and share the complexities of human experiences.

Having graduated in July 2024 with a First Class Honours BA in Film and Television Studies/Fine Art from Aberystwyth University, Anna is now working on an MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at the University of the Arts, London (UAL).

What does an average day of art practice look like for you?

Depending on the day, I'll either be researching, editing, or on a location shoot. My practice is largely documentary-based, so my editing is limited to adjustments in colour, white balance, or tone and adjusting rotation. The key part of documentary photography is not editing the image to manipulate the subject, so I spend very little time in Photoshop; my only edits are to improve clarification.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

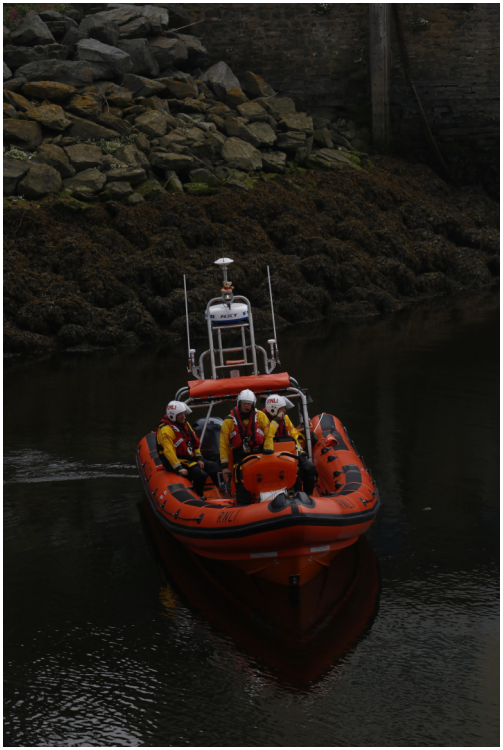
When I was much younger, I spent a lot of time during school holidays with my grandparents on the south coast of England at the beach. Most of my time there was spent looking for shells that had been washed up or peering into rock pools, looking for any crabs or tiny fish hiding in them.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

Although most of my photography is digital, I still have a strong love for film, both 35mm and large format photography. I spent a lot of my final year at university researching the development of photography technology and its impact on style. Through this, I began to love the slower pace that film photography demands.

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

When I started actively researching the work of other photographers and building up a framework of knowledge surrounding the historical context of the subjects I was photographing. I now find that context is extremely important to constructing an objective view of a situation, and this is very important for capturing the facts.



(above) *Heading Off*; (left) *Close Manoeuvring*, Photography, 2024

Website: annakaesser.com

14 Catherine Levey

Catherine Levey's interest in people is reflected throughout her practice, which involves immersing herself in stories from biographies and archives and painting her emotional response, which is naturally self-referential, and through a feminist lens.

By drawing and painting in fragile layers, Levey captures the dreamlike presence of these people, who are often presented without context, inviting a unique dialogue through questions about the narrative.

(below) *Night swimming*, Mixed Media, 58 x 84 cm, 2024

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

After graduating last year, I felt adrift without academic input, critique, or an end goal. I continued with the portrait painting I'd focused on towards the end of my degree, but seemed cut loose. I was so excited to be accepted for an artist residency in a place that's very special to me in North Wales. Here, I can focus on the local history, people, archives, or landscapes. I'm making preparatory sketchbook work already, as I know the two weeks will pass very quickly. To consider landscape again is a big, but exciting change for me.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

I like any medium that can be fluid and allows you to surrender control—even after thinking I've mastered the technique! Thin applications of oil paint and ink tend to be my go-to mediums. I like transparency and frailty within my work; if it becomes too opaque, I feel it's lost something. The way you can place pigment in a solvent and it makes accidental marks is still magical to me. I often check in on it while it's drying to see the changes.

Does art help you address other areas of your life?

I have a challenging job in the NHS, which is stressful and makes it hard to switch off. Making art is one of the things that has to be mindful.

I need to be in a certain space to make art; it can't be forced. I need to be fairly relaxed, inspired, and unburdened by other problems. If I'm in a wound-up place, the work reflects that, which isn't ideal when aiming for looseness and fluidity! I've recently started a daily sketchbook challenge with some art friends, responding to a prompt. The idea is to experiment without concern for outcome or external pressure. I already see how half an hour doing this a day can really bring the joy back into art. I think all artists can get tied up with art being too serious sometimes, and I feel it's important to mess around for fun and just see what comes up.

What advice would you give yourself from ten years ago?

Ten years ago, I was just starting my art practice. I would hop from medium to medium, experimenting all the time. So much of what I made didn't work, and I didn't see how important this was back then. Failure means you're challenging yourself and developing. I'm not sure I'll ever reach a place where I make the same kind of work over and over; I still feel like I'm climbing a mountain and will never reach the top. I read "Progression, not perfection" somewhere, and it's so true. I would tell myself to not get upset at the failures, not to put stuff in the bin... And to apply advice from experienced artists and university tutors, as they can see your blind spots.

Instagram: @catherine.levey
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16 Chengyu Yao

Chengyu Yao was born in Zhejiang, China, and is currently studying at Goldsmiths in London for her undergraduate degree in Fine Art. Chengyu Yao's work focuses on marginalised groups, ideology, and mysticism, using her own experiences as a starting point to connect with all kinds of forgotten people, events, and objects. Her practice explores and expresses the voices and stories that have been neglected or forgotten by society through her art practice.

(above) *Sun Rise*, Mixed Media, 200 x 108 cm, 2023

"Sunrises are captured and frozen through watercolours and pigments, softly recording the flow of time and the pulse of life. Water, as the central element of the artwork, not only embodies the origin of life, but also symbolises the fluidity and uncertainty of time. Just as water cannot be fully controlled, life cannot be defined by a single truth. Each droplet of pigment merging and dispersing seems to tell the story of our existence: to live for those fleeting yet beautiful moments."

Where are you from, and how does that affect your work?

I come from Zhejiang, an urban environment full of contradictions in China. Growing up in an East Asian background has given me a particularly keen sense of marginalised identities, collective memory, and family structures. In this rapidly urbanising society, I have witnessed the struggles of many left-behind or forgotten individuals, whose pain and loneliness are often unintentionally or intentionally ignored by the collective consciousness. I hope that it can become a bridge to connect those seemingly distant life experiences.

What is your current focus right now?

Currently, my creative work focuses on exploring the intersection of trauma, supernatural experience, and how marginal identities are constructed and recognised in society. Trauma is an invisible but profound force that is repressed under the consciousness and shapes our inner world in a hidden way, while supernatural experience is like a door that connects the unknown and reality, blurring the boundaries between illusion and reality, providing a new perspective to re-examine ourselves and the environment. My work tries to build a field between the two that allows the viewer to suspend their daily thinking, immerse themselves in self-consciousness, and explore those neglected emotions and memories.

Do you have a network of other artists, and how do they support you?

My time at Goldsmiths gave me a sense of a free and open creative environment with no medium restrictions, and everyone is encouraged to explore their voice. I was fortunate to be able to interact with artists from different backgrounds. We would often share work, dialogue, and advice; inspiring me to push my limitations. This kind of art network supports my creativity, and more importantly, yields spiritual strength. I draw inspiration from their works and discussions and, at the same time, validate my ideas in communication with them. Our mutual support reinforces my belief that art is not just about isolated expression, but inspires deeper meaning and power through mutual collision. This growing relationship has allowed me to explore complex and challenging subjects more confidently.

Instagram: @chengyu_woc
Website: yaochengyu.studio

18 Jonathan Oakes

Jonathan Oakes is an abstract artist who is passionate about the natural world. His artworks are typically mixed media on paper, canvas, or upcycled photographs, and are deeply influenced by environmental concerns. His style is often described as organic, resonant, and potent. Through his art, he hopes to create a starting point for the viewer's imagination.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

About eighteen years ago, there was a once-in-a-lifetime flooding event; it felt like everything was underwater. Since then, we are now seasonally accustomed to the water's menace. The annual threat rises with the water levels. We can no longer live like this; we can no longer live here, a place so idyllic when brown water doesn't cover the streets.

Where are you from, and how does that affect your work?

I spent my formative years in Sheffield, UK, exploring the rugged landscapes of the Peak District. Walking for hours, battered by the blustering winds with aching limbs. The monumental grey, lichen-covered rocks jutting out of the bracken and the heather. The russets, browns, and greens are accentuated by the sharp yellow of the gorse flowers and purple heather. Tonally warm under the clear blue skies. These memories are embedded, as now I live far, far away. The colours and the forms still sneak through my subconscious choices when painting.

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

Roughly four years ago, after a break from art, my circumstances changed. My forever home was settled, and my designated studio space was established. The more time I spend in there, the smaller it becomes.

What advice do you have for young, aspiring artists?

Art is not just painting or drawing; there are no rules about what you can try. Techniques can be learnt and skills practiced, but don't let technical ability get in the way of your expression. For inspiration, study subjects that interest you. If you are true to yourself, your truth will be seen.

(above) *Submerging*, Mixed Media on Photo Collage, 30 x 21 cm, 2023

What's the end goal of your work?

I have always tried to make art to communicate and not to simply decorate. I express myself through the artworks and try to highlight my concerns about various contemporary issues. Ideally the end purpose is to inspire the viewer's imagination through the subject matter of the artwork. Small changes can have big results.

Instagram: @art4oka
Website: art4oka.com

20 Brandon J. Barnard

Brandon J. Barnard is an experimental filmmaker, artist, and academic based in Plymouth, UK, originally from Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Currently pursuing a PhD on *Chance in Filmmaking*, his work explores how restricting agency and embracing serendipity can drive creativity and uncover unexpected outcomes. Barnard employs methods such as prompts, arbitrary rules, and collaborative ventures to challenge his creative process, focusing on the journey rather than the final product.

His films often examine how chance intersects with personal expression, crafting a unique balance between control and randomness. Inspired by concepts like the Butterfly Effect and serendipity, Barnard meticulously documents his process to trace the unexpected paths his projects take.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

When I was growing up in South Africa, I remember swimming with my dad in really chaotic waves. Suddenly, I stepped on something that swam away extremely fast, and experienced whiplash as a result. This memory allowed me to understand that the ocean isn't just a place to play and swim; it's a vast and entirely independent living ecosystem.

What is your favourite medium and why?

My favourite medium is short film; weird stuff. MTV music videos come to mind, where someone has complete creative freedom to experiment, and it's still enjoyable. This incorporation of music influences the video, which then influences people's memory of the song and vice versa.

In terms of why video, it's something I've played with since I was a child. Throughout education, rather than doing essays, I would just make videos because it worked well with my skill set. It took Covid-19 to realise that I shouldn't actually be doing what's profitable, or what society expects me to be doing—I should just focus on what I enjoy and make the things that I appreciate.

(above) Stills from *Aqua*, Short Film, 2025

Your short film, Aqua, contrasted 19th-century poetry with 21st-century visuals. What was the message you were hoping to convey for viewers watching?

There's a theme across a few of my pieces that looks at the mimetic nature of creation. In my film, it's not really me; it's an echo of me that existed at this time that I'm trying to change in a certain way to match a theme. In *The Brook*, there is the line, "For men may come and men may go, but I go on forever."

It's the idea that this piece is going to exist beyond me. When I die, like all the works that I created, are going to exist in some form or another. As Espinosa says, art is like energy; it can't be destroyed, just displaced. Art goes into everything.

Instagram: @NihilisticKu
Website: brandonjohnbarnard.com

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q409TaLMdpE

22 Phaedra Levan

Phaedra Levan is a Norwegian experimental filmmaker and photographer who brings her dreaming mind to the waking life, she surrenders control to her subconscious through raw intuition rather than planning in advance. By capturing and editing these movements, she hopes to give true insight into what lies within us, creating something that's uniquely and authentically raw.

> ***"Every night you go to sleep, you let your mental body roam free in a seemingly untouchable dream world without limitations or structure. Your subconscious seamlessly creates scenes of wonder, comfort, and disturbed disarray."***

(above) Still from *Ask The Water!!*, Film, 1m 57s, 2025

Watch: youtube.com/
watch?v=qcdb7EBmqgM&t

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

I'm assuming it's a dream because of the circumstance, but it feels so much like a memory—there's this lake where I always used to go as a kid with my family called Langevannet [the long water]. I was sitting at the bottom of the lake, maybe three meters below, looking up. I watched people swimming around above me. I was essentially drowning, but I felt so peaceful; I was just observing the world go on even if I was dying. I have no memory of what happened before or after that moment. Even if it was just a dream, it's something that has stuck with me through the years.

Does art help you address other areas of your life?

My art is a form of self-expression from within my subconscious. As a result, I often make things that surprise me about how truthful I am being about my own state of mind, without being fully aware of it myself. I realise things I didn't even know I was addressing. For example, in a recent photo series I made, I realised that I had just created the embodiment of my own personal metamorphosis.

How do you define success as an artist?

Success is having anyone see your art and feel something deep within themselves. The most important thing about art is to make something that is authentic and from within yourself.

Do you have a network of other artists, and how do they support you?

I haven't until very recently. I've been isolated and kinda stuck in a small town in Norway. It has made me quite depressed and lonely. I recently decided to build my own community of like-minded people, so I created a Discord group for experimental filmmakers who like Dream Logic, David Lynch, Maya Deren, and similar themes. This led me to apply to this magazine on the encouragement of my newfound friend Brandon, who is also featured. Thank you Brandon.

Instagram: @phaedralevan
YouTube: @SurrealTerpsichore

24 RW Taylor

Alumni of Leeds Arts University and member of the Leeds Print Workshop, RW Taylor is a printmaker who enriches children's storybooks with their illustrations. Their latest book, *Never Stop Asking Questions!* encourages and promotes creativity, imagination, and a little daydreaming.

> *"Water is so important to all of us, often taken for granted, and so sought after in many countries. Biologically, water makes us what we are, and maybe this is why we are so fascinated by the sea. I often think the sea and outer space are one and the same, both vast, both calming and terrifying in equal measure, and both on the whole unexplored."*

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

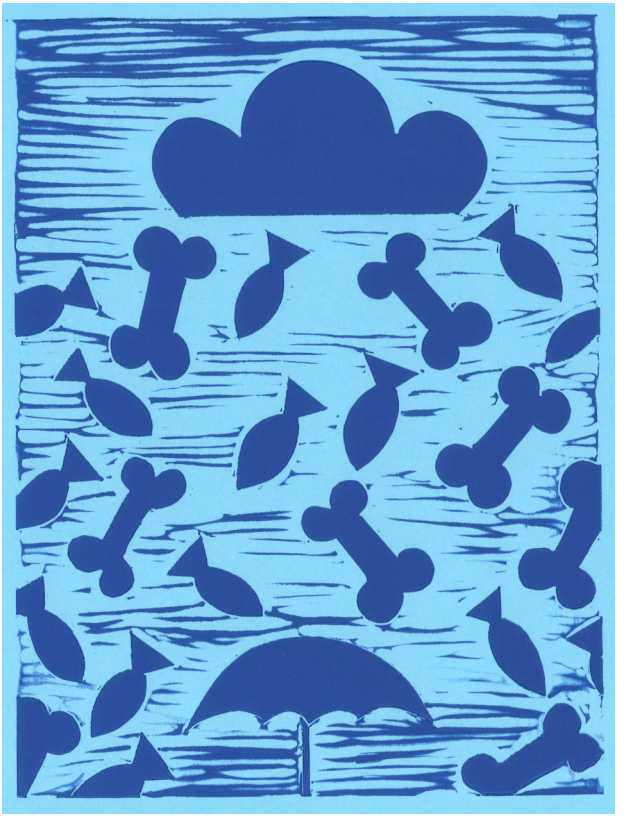
One of my earliest memories of water is the seaside. Staying in Staying in Atwick cottages where the sea was quite literally at the end of the lane gave both my imaginative and hyperactive younger self the freedom I desired. The infinite force and calmness of the North Sea, which I would at one point marvel at as it crashed against the cliffs beside our family seaside homes. This was the very same sea as I paddled and swam in the summer holidays alongside our family dog, Penny (aka Pudding).

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

I've started 2025 with the release of my book, which has been my focus for a long time. To finally complete such an all-encompassing work can bring both a feeling of loss and a feeling of freedom, and in many ways, satisfaction that a book that has certainly been my most ambitious yet, is now out there. 2025 will be a year of sharing my work as much as possible. Ideally, I'd also like to proceed through 2025 with discovery and more experimentation in my artwork; it would be good to do something completely new.

What is something anyone new to your art should know?

My art is mainly aimed at children, but I encourage people of all ages to embrace everything creative and imaginative—and most of all, all things happy. The world is a confusing and concerning place so very often, but the joys should never be overlooked. I want adults to view my work through the eyes of themselves as a child, and if anyone's perception of the art is different from mine, that's fine too. The world can be a peaceful and positive place if only we all give it, and every creature that we share our planet with, a chance and a smile.



(left, decending) *It's Raining for Cats and Dogs*, Linocut, A5, 2025

From Sky to Sea - You're a Star!, Linocut, 30 x 30 cm, 2017

Website: wishuponastarfish.wixsite.com/wishuponastarfish

26 Cameron Lings

"Visually, it [Distina] draws similarities to an air bound water droplet, suspended momentarily in a form impossible to recreate, capture, or manifest once more."

(above) *Distina*, Discarded Cardboard, Wall Filler, Pearlescent Powder, & Resin, 20 x 45 x 25 cm, 2024

(right) *Distina* [detail]

Cameron Lings is an award-winning contemporary artist and sculptor based in the North East of the UK. Lings's typical practice pushes the means of how literary, statistical, and numeric information is perceived through an artistic lens. His wider works challenge both the fundamentals of shape and form, as well as the limitations of material. Variations of artistic styles, subjectivity, levels of abstraction, and visual traits surface within these experimental art pieces.

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

The pandemic certainly took centre stage as a major turning point for many contemporary artists, in both the UK and abroad—for me, this was no different. During this time, I was a student, and considered the climate to be a pivotal period in learning and creating art. My experience of this was to find identity in my practice and allow natural gravitation towards ways of working that resonated with me. From a practical perspective, I challenged myself to become more resourceful, not only in order to adapt to the constraints of the pandemic, but also to build on a skill set in adapting to change outside of my control.

Instagram:@cameron_lings_
Website: cameronlingsart.co.uk

Do you have a network of other artists, and how do they support you?

I am very fortunate to be surrounded by ambitious, talented, and supportive local artists and organisations. Since arriving in the North East of England approximately seven years ago, the generosity of other creatives has allowed me to maintain momentum in my arts practice. From affordable and flexible studio spaces, fantastic opportunities for emerging practitioners, and friendly guidance and reassurance; I certainly owe a lot of credit to those around me for any form of success that comes my way.

What advice do you have for young, aspiring artists?

I believe taking the first steps into the world of exhibiting and producing art can be as daunting as it is confusing. Finding success in the world of contemporary art is not a black-and-white checklist of qualifications you need, and employment processes to follow—and let's not forget that success means different things to different people. Part of my experience of being an emerging creative practitioner is also sadly seeing how people around me lose interest, momentum, motivation, or the enjoyment of creating their own art. An aspiring artist should aim to make art that they want to make.

28 Geraldine Leahy

Concerned with the exigent and immediate issues of climate change, Geraldine Leahy's practice focuses on coastal erosion, as well as the entanglement of natural and manufactured debris on the beach. Her approach involves working with layered processes that reflect the mutability and fragile beauty of a littoral environment under threat. Her use of shoreline debris suggests environmental changes and encourages reflection on the harmful effects mankind has had on the coastline. Combinations of monoprint and paint reveal the incongruity of manmade materials which strangely assume the appearance of organic forms throughout the painting process, mutating into evocations of the catastrophic entanglement of mankind and the natural world.

What space does your art occupy in contemporary art?

Many artists today are concerned with environmental issues due to the alarming progression of climate change. Their aim is to highlight the dangers and to encourage a change in behaviour. My practice sits within this space. Focusing on the presence of unwanted manmade debris in nature. I aim to demonstrate how these objects have become entangled with natural materials to the point where it has become difficult to tell the difference—evidence of mankind's insidious impact on the natural world.

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

During my college studies, I began to experiment with monoprint in the form of gel plate printing. This simple technique allowed me to visually embed shoreline materials such as lengths of rope and plastics into the painting surface to mimic how they are embedded in the sand on the beach. This process reinforced my interest in the surfeit of manufactured objects that were strewn on the eroded shoreline.

What is the role of an artist in society, and why is it important?

The artist is concerned with highlighting vital social, political, and environmental issues. For example, climate change has become a persistent and pressing subject for many of today's artists who are trying to change the hearts and minds of viewers with their thought-provoking work. Their role is a vital one as they draw attention to those corporations who have financial gain as their aim, at the expense of the environment. A provocative piece of art is capable of touching the viewer and making them think about the importance of their own responsibilities in relation to the natural world.

I think it is important for the young artist to make themselves known in the art world. Networking is really important, so they should attend exhibitions and talks. They should apply for a variety of opportunities, such as art awards, publications, and exhibitions. Social media can keep them informed of art events and opportunities. They might also be interested in membership in organisations such as the VAA and VAI, which offer a lot of support and advice. In time, the aspiring artist will notice their network of support is increasing and their submissions to opportunities are becoming more successful.

(below) *Ghost Plastic*, Monoprint, Acrylic, & Gouache, 76.2 x 50.8 cm, 2021

Instagram: @gleahyart
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30 Lorrain Mailer

Lorrain Mailer is a conceptual artist who focuses on excessive plastic manufacturing and its disposal in the world, which presents an environmental and far-reaching dilemma for all living matter. It reveals our negative human qualities such as double standards, complicit attitudes, and patriarchal elements—at its core is the human instinct for power. Her practice serves to bring this to the forefront.

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

Yes, I am excited to start the year with a new direction in my practice with an installation at the Winter Sculpture Park in Thamesmead, south London, organised by gallery No. 32. Rather than producing sculptures and site-specific installations, this work is combining everything before and morphing it into architecture and product design. The "House" will retain my fundamental objective to challenge society, multinational corporations, and our political policy to stem the terrifying increase in virgin plastic production and the never-ending dumping of waste. This artwork will have a positive message suggesting reusing, recycling, and reclaiming.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

We have created a Frankenstein material. A combination of ancient raw organic liquid congealed with other components that has changed indefinitely the molecule structure. A man-made material designed to facilitate convenience, that ultimately produces minuscule particles that threaten all organic matter, even human health and reproduction. We are faced with a global crisis, so what better than to use the material that is causing it?

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

During my BA, I received a brief to integrate everyday materiality, function, and identity into my work. This inspired me to use bubble wrap, a utilitarian fabric designed to protect objects immeasurably produced and discarded. This became a central element in my project. I filled the bubbles with tumble dryer fluff, which contains traces of organic DNA, symbolising biological identity. When unrolled, the bubble wrap resembled a wedding veil, offering a broad range of disturbing interpretations. This single artwork opened numerous possibilities for my creative expression.

(right, descending) *Aquarius*, Sculpture, 4 x 6 m, 2021

Aquarius [detail]

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32 Johannes C. Gerard

The works of Johannes C. Gerard generally approach a subject in a metaphorical and symbolic style. Here, the motif of a doomsday scenario is hidden, referring to two increasingly common extremes surrounding water that are becoming more and more common. First, drought; and second, catastrophic floods. The work shows no dry nor flooded fields, no empty ponds nor dry riverbeds, and no destruction. Instead, Gerard establishes connections and overlays with normal everyday objects and situations that have far less devastating effects.

Your photographs, Open-Close...Drought and "Help me...raindrops!" focus heavily on the abundance or lack of water. How significantly do environmental issues influence your practice?

Many years ago I wasn't very concerned with the environment, because in Europe we always have enough water to drink. I've lived in or visited many countries where water is already a problem. In parts of Africa and Asia, we already see the effects on growth—no raindrops for months; nothing comes. I go to places like Bangladesh, where the water really takes away the land. People already start to run to higher places. Here in the Netherlands, water here is continuously a threat, but at least we have money, resources, and facilities to fight it off.

What space does your art, or in this case photography, occupy in the contemporary art world?

I don't normally think too much about the art world. Honestly, I'm a lonely wolf. I do projects with other people, but that's becoming less and less my preference. I do my things, do not follow trends—all the rest, for me, is far away. I don't think about artistic motivations and theoretical statements. I cannot think in an everyday, so-called normal logic.

Where other people (artists) draw a straight line or make a direct "logical" connection from A to B and then to C, I will make an "illogical" connecting link from A to K and then from K to D. I just know I have to start it, and then with time I begin to see what's coming out.

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

I don't think so, because normally I don't have expectations. Don't even ask me to have hope, because I'm a doom thinker. Sometimes things change extremely slowly. Other times, incredibly quickly—both in a positive way, or in a bad way. You must maintain a stiff upper lip, and you will be strengthened in both cases. So in 2025, I have no real expectation, the same for 2024. We're already in February; the year is nearly over!

(left) *Open-Close...Drought*, Photography, 2022

(below) *"Help me... raindrops!"*, Photography, 2024

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34 Dee Holt

Based in Northern England, Dee Holt is a fine art, environmental, and surf photographer who is driven by a practice-as-research methodology, exploring and experimenting with both digital and analogue photographic techniques to create thought-provoking and impactful images.

Alongside their practice, Dee teaches photography to adult learners, A-level students, and undergraduates at a local college. The act of sharing knowledge is essential in refining her own expertise and preserving photography techniques for future generations to enjoy.

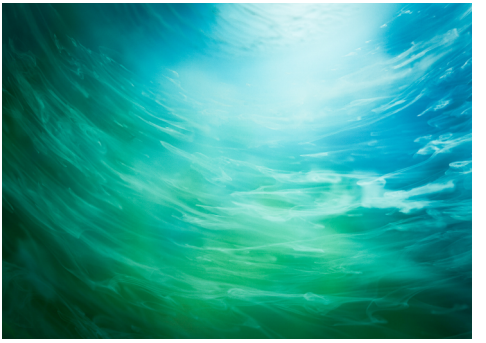
What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

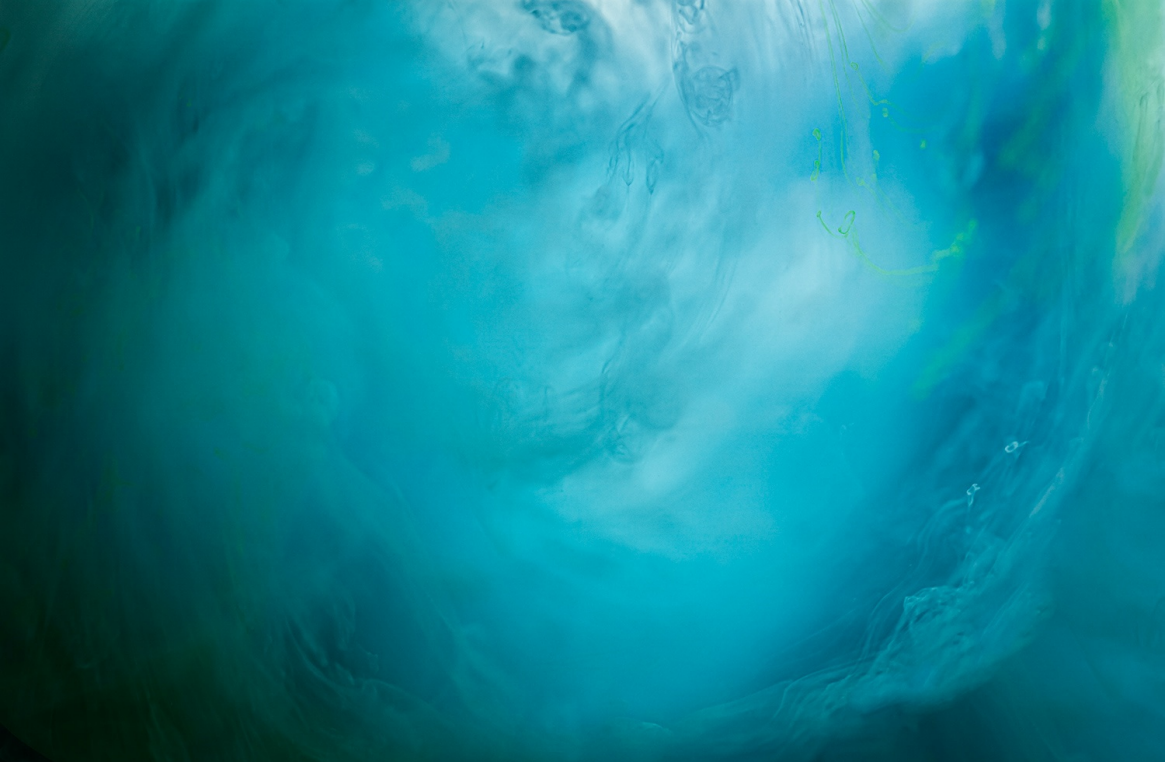
Probably swimming as a child. Growing up in York, at the time there was a big emphasis on river safety. At a very young age, you were introduced to swimming in the local swimming baths. As I'm neurodivergent, these lessons were a big hyperfixation. Prior to this, I would have already been in the sea, but I just remember solely enjoying the act and emotional aspect of just being in the water. The swimming lessons cultivated an environment where I felt like I fit in, as opposed to other aspects of school where I felt like I didn't.

What is something anyone new to your art should know?

Traditionally, I can take "normal" photographs, but as I'm about to start this PhD, I'm focusing on more experimental work, which tends to be very marmitey. I observe the case that not everything has to be understood as being a perfectly clear picture. We live in a world at the minute where everything has to be perfect; water is constantly moving and ever-changing. You will never get the same picture of a moving body of water more than once. And it's a bit like life, you know what I mean? I try to reflect this in my work. Life isn't consistent, and everything changes. When I'm teaching, I actively encourage students to work in manual mode, and to use the camera as a tool for their own purpose. A big thing in my last thesis was about the camera as an extension of the body, like I would use a hand or a paintbrush. There is a story that I want to get across; the process of setting up the image is the image, not just the mere idea.

(below) *Under the Sea* 1, Digital Photography, A3, 2021





(above) *Under the Sea* 2, Digital Photography, A3, 2021

"This work is acrylic ink captured within a square coffee jar during the pandemic. At the time, access to outdoor spaces and activities, such as spending time by the sea, was limited. Therefore, I sought to recreate the sublime within the constraints of my home."

What is the primary motivator for you to be an artist?

I spent twenty-five years as a microbiologist and absolutely hated it. And as a child, the arts were never something I thought I could do. I didn't pursue my undergraduate degree in photography until 2019. I graduated, chose to stay on, and did a two-year master's in fine art. Now I'm doing the PhD. I've got every photograph I've ever taken from when I was eight years old. Some of them are little 35 mm images I accidentally ruined at the time, but I still chose to keep them because they tell a story of how they were processed, even if done so improperly. I love the tactility of a picture and what it means. Nothing has to be perfect. I try to push this narrative in my teaching. I know some people, especially in the photography world, will see less merit in it. But personally, I do not. Even the worst picture that anybody's ever taken still has intention.

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36 Isabel Young

Isabel Young is an artist and Senior Tutor (Research) at the Royal College of Art. Drawing on archaeological theory and experimental archaeology, she works within an expanded field practice exploring the socio-cultural dynamics and history of the house, its integrated environments, and the people who lived in them.

She holds Masters in both Fine Art and Landscape Architecture. Alongside exhibiting across the UK and internationally, and presenting her research at conferences and symposium, and is an Academic Member of the Landscape Institute, a Member of the Vernacular Architecture Group, and of EXARC.

"The expansive power of the ocean overshadows the scaled architectural model of a bed in an act of displacement. As motifs of a home exhumed from familiar situations and environments, the works in this series engage with the spaces of the home, not just as physical entities, but as documents, archives, and biographies that narrate lived experience embedded and recorded in the fabric of architecture. The sea in this context has the capacity to evoke intensive forces, whilst simultaneously bringing potentials for future flows of movement, relations, and assemblages."

(left) *A Bed of My Own*, Photograph, 45 x 30 cm, 2019

What is your favourite medium, and why?

Darkness. Darkness as a material has the capacity for weight, pressure, and structure. Archaeologist Robin Skeates wrote of the structural potential of dark and light, which can be felt in many prehistoric spaces through the sensory experience of navigating the body through ancient architecture. In many of my expanded artworks, tenebrism is used to obscure, and in conjunction with the interiority of the architectural models I construct, the physical darkness within the artwork mediates between space, materiality, and invisibility.

Can you tell me about a significant turning point in your practice?

A recent example of my practice, *The Lararium Project* (a shrine to the household gods), can be visited in the Roman Villa at Butser Ancient Farm, a museum of experimental archaeology. As a permanent fixture, the lararium is used for education and re-enactments, gaining further insight into religious practices and associated rituals, and to explore the cultural dynamics of the Roman home. As a critical landmark for my research, I pioneered a new methodology combining experimental archaeology with contemporary art practice in consideration of how we can apply ancient practices to contemporary settings, taking into account the history whilst being in the present.

What is your current focus right now?

Beginning six-thousand years ago in the Neolithic, my current project builds on my recent fieldwork in the enigmatic passage graves on the islands of Orkney and Jersey. *Houses of the Ancestors* expands on methodologies I have pioneered, combining experimental archaeology with contemporary art to reconsider the purpose and practice of ancient burial sites. Directly informed by my primary research during 2024, I am now working on two new expanded paintings reinterpreting La Hougue Bie, Jersey (4000–3500 BCE) and Cuween Hill Chambered Cairn, Orkney (3000 BCE). Inspired by new materialism, relational approaches, and the latest archaeological findings, these works-in-progress draw on current archaeological theory.

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38 Hugo Espírito Santo

Hugo Espírito Santo was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in the spring of 1993. He currently lives and works in Paris, France, where he maintains a painting practice centred around the paint pouring technique.

Using acrylic paint and water (or sometimes black coffee), he layers contrasting hues over old canvases, depicting altered states of consciousness through abstract and non-linear shapes. In this process, Santo lets the watered-down paint run its course, partially surrendering control to its own rhythm and adherence to gravity with minimal interference. It is here that the artist becomes a vehicle for the unknown.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

In 1998, when I was still living in Lisbon, there was a World's Fair in Lisbon called *The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future*. It was such a big deal that an entirely new part of the city was constructed to accommodate it. I remember walking there with my parents. This zone was next to a port, which is why water comes to mind. An aquarium was constructed alongside the river, which made for a very nice walk.

I'm definitely attracted to the plasticity and freedom of water. We often think rationally or irrationally, and water is the same, moving freely, and highly flexible. That is the way I would like to think of myself, as both an artist and a person.

How does art help you address other areas of your life?

I think it's a matter of mental health, but something I need to do. Not just painting, but any act of creating something. I've known for a long time that art and creativity are important ways for me to find meaning and purpose in life. If I didn't create anything, I would probably feel very bad about my existence. Art helps me to rely on my own instincts and relieves me of focusing too hard.

Feedback is important, and so is recognition. But equally, it's easy to fall into that hole of seeking external validation, which is tricky because the opposite can lead to self-reclusion. I like my work to be seen, but even if my paintings never left my apartment, or my music was not to be heard, it would still be worthwhile to create. It's not my goal to earn a living from art; if no one likes my paintings, I'm still going to be able to pay my rent. This has allowed me to maintain a healthy practice.

What attracted you to the use of the paint pouring technique over other application methods?

A big inspiration for me growing up was Jackson Pollock because my dad had a print of his in his office. Growing up, this print was my first regular contact with art. It's easier now to look back at it and realise its importance. I adopted a similar technique to Pollock's when I first started to experiment with painting, but not exactly the same. Pollock splashed the paint with his brush, but I don't really do that. Equally, I don't think my practice has reached its final form. I have no formal training or education, and learn everything myself. I think there are so many other things I can explore within this technique.

I'm totally fascinated by the idea that it's not about what the painting represents, but rather, the painting as the stage itself, such as the visual representation of your gestures when you are painting it. Often when people see an abstract painting, they instantly try to decode it, and while it's fun to hear what people see in my work, I'm really drawn to that feeling of the canvas as a stage and the painting itself—materially representing the movements I had on its physicality which I experienced firsthand.

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Website: hugoespiritosanto.com

(right) *#1014*, Acrylic on Canvas, 90 x 90 cm, 2022

40 Smodge

Sam Cameron-Hodge, aka Smodge, has always enjoyed art as a vehicle to become more in touch with her emotional health, leading her to understand that she cannot be happy without it. Possessing a broad range of experience with many artistic mediums, film photography is her current focus. Smodge enjoys experimental techniques, often incorporating a snap-it-and-see approach. For her, photography is a mindful activity—an opportunity to focus on the world around her and overcome difficult days.

What motivates you to work?

When I'm not doing something that's creative for a while, I get really down. I can be quite flighty in the way I switch and change. I get bored easily, and then I move on to something else; photography is the thing that's stuck. For me, photography is very personal; an act of mindfulness, allowing me to engage with the world around me, rather than the things ahead of me or things that have passed. Through film photography, I am able to just go out, take photos, and not have to look at a screen or dwell too deeply on what I've done. Although I do enjoy sharing my work when it's produced, the act of taking photos is what I really enjoy. As a rule, when the photos arrive, you'll typically like a couple out of thirty-six, which is exciting and also a little bit disappointing.

Your work, As the City Moves, refers to an inability to navigate highly populated environments. Has art provided you with a means of communicating in less conventional ways?

I took the photo a while ago in London, and then during a trip to York, I really struggled with how many people there were. I felt like I was drowning in people and somehow always walking against the tide. Afterwards, I started thinking about the photo and how the movement in it linked to the feelings I had in York. Stuck on this imagery of water, the ocean, and tides, I felt I finally had the words to articulate it. Before I'd written that, I'd never been able to properly explain how these situations can affect me. I used to really enjoy writing, but haven't done it much in recent years. I hope it's something I can do more of in relation to my photography.

What is the role of an artist in society, and why is it important?

I think any art, regardless of the medium, has got a massive role to play if we want to avoid a grey future. Things like science and technology are a huge focus in society at the moment, and whilst those things are important, art is about an emotional connection with each other. Thus, the role of the artist is to create things that give us that connection, allowing the audience (and the artist) to understand how each other feel on a deeper level.

Instagram: @_smodge_

As the people move. The city moves. Like the waves. Of an undulating ocean.

But I cannot swim

(above) *As the city moves*, Photography, 16 x 16 ", 2023/24

42 Ben Winter

Using found images, photographs, and memory, Ben Winter is interested in themes of ritual activity, displacement, and otherness. Taking images from old photography books, customs from different parts of the world, and scenes he finds engaging, he combines them in the process of developing his own.

Mystery and mythology are key to the conceptualisation of his work; the storytelling and communality that is present in group activity contrasted with individualism and self-motivated productivity is something he's currently exploring in his practice.

(above) *Drifting By*, Oil on Wooden Board, 122 x 60 cm, 2024

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

I was born in Brighton, right by the sea, and later I moved to a little town called Lewes. It's where they do the Lewes Bonfire celebrations, big processions and parades, that sort of thing. Then we moved to Bridlington when I was seven. Obviously, the sea was always there, but in quite an oppressive way. The huge North Sea, such a commanding presence. It's no Caribbean island, either. It's cold and wet. I guess it feeds into my work a bit; my memories of water go back quite far. Although, saying that, I never went into the sea; it's actually quite a scary thing to me because it's the unknown—a formidable, freezing, sublime body. Incredible, beautiful, but also dangerous. I exercise a respect for it, I guess.

What's the biggest challenge of being an artist, and how do you address it?

The biggest challenge is maintaining a sense of self-belief. I fully believe that I should continue doing art, but it doesn't mean that I'm not constantly questioning myself. You can't just go through the motions; you have to actually apply yourself in lots of different ways, whether through creative choices or just endurance. I'm always questioning my decision-making, but I am at ease with the reality that it's just part of the process, and that it doesn't have to be negative.

(below) *Boy Boat*, Oil on Canvas, 80 x 56 cm, 2025

Your application of paint in Boy Boat and Drifting By is almost entirely abstract. Would you describe your approach to painting as planned and premeditated, or erratic and impulsive?

Definitely somewhere between the two. I position my work between abstract and expressionism in the way that I paint. I very much identify a form and then choose how I want to express it, in ways that are both considered or instant. Sometimes, it works, which seems a bit too easy, and you're like, "Okay, should I be doing more to this?" Because I don't feel like I've worked very hard on it. Sometimes you just do it, and it's like, "Wow, that's exactly what I wanted it to be."

It's like the fluidity of water. I just choose at the time that I'm doing it; I might have a little think before, but there's never a sense of "This is a plan; I'm going to try and stick to it." Once I've done it, that's the end of the process. It's quite an uncomfortable position to be in, and I think you have to embrace that, how uncomfortable it is not knowing. There's no final answer, which I like. I want there to be symbols and signs that aren't signifying anything. They're just a process, and at some point it'll come to an end, and I don't necessarily decide when that is.

Instagram: @benw_1984

44 Jake Jacobs

Jake Jacobs is an abstract artist working in Bristol, studying Fine Art with History of Art at the University of Leeds. His process combines forms that are either meticulously planned or an immediate impulse while exploring the process, the surface, the medium, and the manipulation of paint itself. Influenced by those who have gone before him, he sees himself as working within a continuum of art practice.

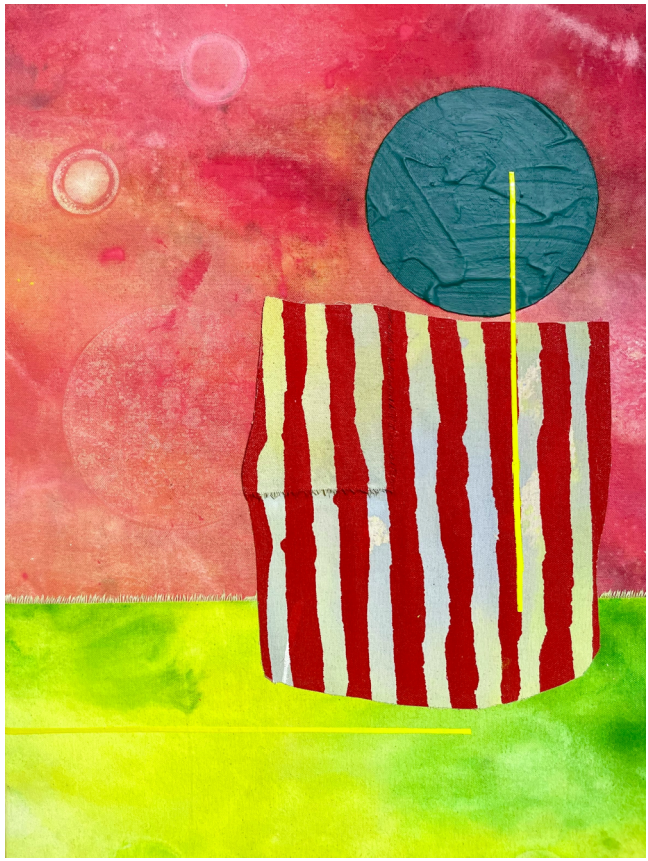
> ***"By extensively diluting acrylic paint, I allow it to flow freely across the canvas, embracing the unpredictable and natural behaviours of water. This method also introduces elements of chance and spontaneity, reflecting the inherent unpredictability of aquatic environments."***

What does an average day of art practice look like for you?

My art practice varies depending on whether I'm in Bristol or Leeds. Wherever I'm working, I start with a to-do list, setting intentions for the day. I plan my artworks outside the studio, sketching on my iPad, so when I arrive, it's all about getting straight into making. I often work with heavily diluted paint, which takes time to dry, meaning pieces often evolve over days. This slow layering process allows for both spontaneity and refinement.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

Acrylic is by far my favourite medium because of its incredible versatility. I push it to its extremes, sometimes diluting it to the point where it's almost just water, creating delicate, fluid layers, and other times thickening it for rich, textured surfaces. Its fast-drying nature allows for constant layering and reworking, making it the perfect medium for experimentation.



(bottom left) *Three Jugs on a Shelf*, Acrylic, Oil, & Collage on Canvas, 45 x 60 cm, 2024

(top right) *A Sunset Over Water*, Acrylic & Collage on Canvas, 45 x 60 cm, 2024

What is your current focus right now?

Right now, I'm focusing on embracing mistakes as part of the process, seeing them as valuable rather than frustrating. I tend to get wound up when things don't go to plan, so I'm learning to step away, start fresh, and trust the work's evolution. I'm also becoming more intuitive, approaching large canvases without hesitation and taking more time to step back, reflect, and let each piece guide my next move.

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46 Andrew Payne

Andrew Payne is a British artist who has specialised in the creation of short films of a nearby river since 2006. With an undergraduate degree in Fine Art, and postgraduate printmaking at the Slade School of Art in London, his artistic career began with still photography, but now he concentrates on filmmaking, deriving inspiration from the work of Constable, Turner, and 17th-century Dutch landscape painters.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

Learning to swim when I was a small child at school and, unfortunately, failing at it. After I left the Slade, I didn't want to carry on printmaking and living very close to a river landscape; I began to take photos of water. Since then I have been constantly fascinated by the interaction of the light with the water.

What advice do you have for young aspiring artists?

I think persistence is a good thing. Believing and trusting in your ideas and not being swayed by fashion or what you think you should be making. The narrative of art education seems to have changed since I was in college, focusing less on encouraging experimentation, sharing, and discovery, and more on setting you up for a career. While I understand the merit in this, I am anxious that we are losing sight of pursuing art because you love it. I would consider myself to be a professional artist because of my art training, but it's never been my full-time job.

As someone who spends more time by the river than most, what are some of the most surprising things you have seen that other people may struggle to believe?

It's the light, either on the water or solid features in the landscape. My most recent films show the patterns, reflections, shadows and the colour on the water under a road bridge. They are mesmerising. Sometimes, if I'm near a path, people will stop me and ask me what I'm doing. There are people who are genuinely interested to know what I'm looking at. Occasionally you get into conversations about what they've seen in the river as well.

(above) Stills from *Water under a bridge*, Short Film, 2024

Watch: vimeo.com/940011291

Website: andrewpayne.org.uk

48 Ella Johnston

Grounded in drawing, the practice of Ella Johnston is an ongoing investigation into mark-making processes, gesture, and calligraphy. Her work currently engages with nostalgia, homesickness, text, and memory; diving deep into the writing and overwriting of histories.

Through layered application of paint and ink on distorted, crumpled paper, she interrogates the vulnerability of existence, and the displacement and disruption of all creatures that fall victim to the forces of capitalism at the hands of the few in control. In addition, she is co-founder of the small indie book publisher and art project Dunlin Press.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

I grew up around the corner from the Regent's Canal, which ran right around King's Cross through Hackney. There were a lot of factories where I grew up; I particularly remember a print factory, which is now luxury apartments called "The French Docks." That language interests me as well, and it probably isn't obvious in my work, but it's definitely there; how we label and distort things. With my work, I have this idea of the palimpsest, things written over each other again and again; cities are an example. Weirdly, that canal was my primary access to nature—even if, at the time, it wasn't well looked after. There were always people, and all kinds of animals building their homes—it was a beautiful connection between nature and urban centres. Even if it was man made, there was something wild and untameable about it.

(left) *Ocean*, Ink on Paper, 0.43 x 20 m, 2024

In your work Ocean, you scrunched the paper to create a sort of ruffling effect. At what point does this become a sculpture and not a painting? Is contemporary art, beyond such restrictive categories?

It's something I'm dealing with at the moment. I'm doing a course called The Other MA, which is an alternative art school course. The first assignment was to disrupt my practice. Up until then, my practice had strong reverence for beautiful, high-quality materials. So I thought, what if I just got a roll of value paper that you use for schools and worked on both sides? Then, I started scrunching it, making some paper sculptures. Across my body of work, the foundation is always in drawing. The primary takeaway is that I, a traditionally two-dimensional artist, am enjoying bringing my work into the third dimension. There's so much room for development, that I'm not currently able to provide a clear answer!

How do you define success as an artist?

Perhaps the most obvious answer would be to earn money out of it. I understand now; I will never be more successful than I currently am, in the sense that I'm earning a little bit of money on my part-time job, and spending infinitely more time working on my art. There's a freedom that comes with that because I'm not catering for anyone else. I have all the necessities; I can pay for my studio and make art for me. In some ways, that's the most success I'll have. I'm not well known, which means no external expectations. I think that the conventional perception of what a successful artist is, is actually far from ideal for most people. I think success looks like doing it—being honest, open, and having a collaborative mindset.

(right) *And We Too Are Swimming*, Acrylic & Paint Marker on Canvas, 40 x 34 cm, 2024

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50 Alexandra Campbell

Alexandra Campbell's work embraces the tactile and intentional nature of film photography, where each frame is a deliberate decision made long before the shutter clicks. Experimenting with both colour and black-and-white emulsions, she explores how the choice of medium shapes the narrative being told. For her, photography is less about capturing reality, and more about interpreting it—a playful and creative process that invites both thought and spontaneity.

Through the use of various 35mm and medium-format cameras, Campbell emphasises the connection between vision and craft, holding the belief that photography is about the artistic approach rather than the equipment. Each image she creates reflects a commitment to slowing down, seeing intentionally, and embracing the unexpected beauty of analogue processes.

What does an average day of art practice look like for you?

I work full-time hours in an unrelated field, so I try to make photographs on my days off. Typically, I will either plan a walk in a new place, or return to an old favourite, depending on my intention. I will choose the film stock, pack some lunch, and go!

(above) *Lady of the Woods*, Photography, 2025

(right) *January*, Photography, 2025

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

2025 marks one year of making photographs using film. Throughout 2024, I only used 35mm film, but in January of this year, I started practicing with medium format film (120mm), and I am loving the results of this. I plan to keep exploring this and possibly other film formats, and I am interested in how this will influence my work.

What motivates you to work?

I am motivated to make work because of several reasons, but mostly by my understanding that photography is a way of preserving time and making memories. I like to make pictures that document walks that I take, time spent in places I like with people I love, and objects or scenes that I find interesting. I'd like my photography to make viewers feel or recognise something within themselves when seeing my work.

"This work seeks to explore the ephemeral and delicate nature of mist as a form that water can take, and its profound ability to transform our perception of reality. Thick and enveloping, the mist blurs boundaries between the tangible and intangible, the known and the unknown. It acts as a veil, lingering at the edges of vision and softening the lines of the landscape, creating a liminal space where clarity and ambiguity coexist."

What is your current focus right now?

My current focus is to continue to learn and improve on my knowledge and technique in making photographs with film. I also have a goal this year to learn to develop film myself and to make prints of my work. Finally, I am at the very start of the process of developing a project that I am hoping with result in a collection of photos that will make up a book. I am excited for this next year and where my practice will take me!

Instagram: @thatanaloggirl

52 Ela Bochenek

Ela Bochenek creates art to heal, reflect, and convey her soul's language. Each work undergoes a deeply meditative process, exploring the inner landscapes of her emotions, memories, and experiences. Through layers of texture, colour, and form, she celebrates intersections between sea and land, obvious and obscured, and fluidity and stillness.

Proximity to the sea and wilderness inspires Bochenek's work, providing ample opportunity to include nature's whispers, patterns, and tranquillity in her paintings. Using materials like sand and seawater, or flat rocks as tools, she aims to reflect the richness and fragility of these landscapes on the canvas.

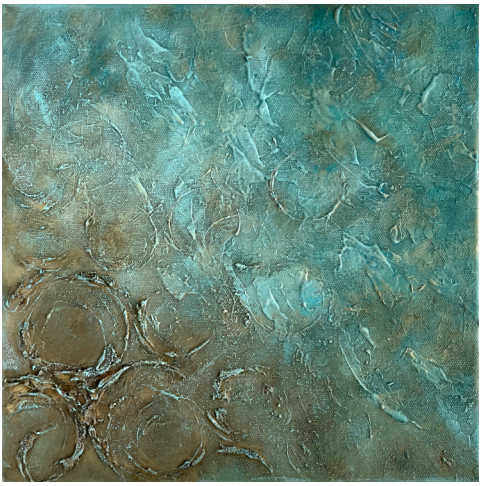
What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

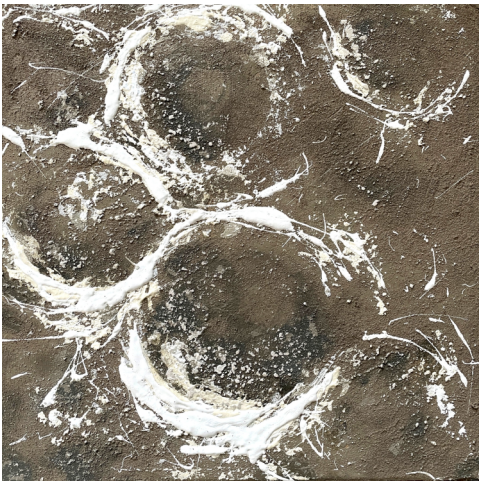
As a child, I used to spend a lot of time in the countryside at my grandparents. There was a very shallow and clear river where we spent so much time. It was gorgeous; you could easily just paddle in it without worry. I would spend hours there just observing nature, picking up random rocks or whatever else I could find. That river has unfortunately changed over the years; it's become very dangerous due to floods. It has transitioned from this soothing, calming space, to something that's treacherous and unsettling.

Now I live by the sea; it has a huge impact on my life. I've met many artists living here in Scarborough, all influenced by the water in some way. The way I approach my work keeps changing all the time, in the same way water does. You can go to the sea every day, and the water is completely different—just like my painting process. Every day is different because mentally, I'm in a different place. I'm coming in and out with different emotions, just like tides.

Where are you from, and how does that affect your work?

I was born and raised in Poland, and I lived there for twenty-five years. In 2010, I moved to England. We were supposed to stop in Scarborough just for a while—of course, all those years after, we're still here. It's the sea; you can't escape. I feel as though I am in between countries. When I visit back to my hometown, it doesn't feel like my hometown anymore; it changes. Working for Scarborough Museums and Galleries, I'm well informed on local history and how Scarborough used to look, which is not part of my story. I think I've sort of found my home in the space in between, and starting to accept that grey area.





Your painting style is evident of someone who has a lot of technical experience. What is your advice for aspiring artists who feel intimidated by the prospect of painting in such a detailed and meticulous way?

I don't really have a strict plan when I start to paint. Building up texture can sometimes require loose planning, but generally, my work is mostly trial and error. What has helped me a lot is viewing mistakes as opportunities, rather than something that needs to be censored. Now when I create something that I don't like straight away, I allow myself time with the work to reflect and contemplate, rather than hastily trying to cover it up. Dipping in and out helps with that as well; it prevents me from jumping to the first idea that comes to me.

I keep a painting journal as well, writing down in which moments I felt free, playful, or challenging. I do the same in other areas of my life, too. I find it helpful writing things down, as I can reflect on my emotions much more clearly. When I take notes, I feel more compelled to finish them, which in turn helps me grapple with both creative and non-creative challenges when I struggle to stay motivated.

(above, left to right) *Between Water and Land*, Acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2021. *Sea Froth*, Acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2022

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54 Elly Platt

Elly Platt is a textile artist inspired by our interactions with the natural world. Incorporating discarded or unwanted materials and other found objects, she conveys stories about our relationships with our clothes and how we wear them.

Currently, Platt is creating work that draws attention towards the pollution of the UK's water. Centring around the River Wandle, this series draws attention to the beauty of the natural environment and how it is impacted by human intervention.

What is something anyone new to your art should know?

I want to convey something that is difficult to deal with or hear, but in a beautiful and interesting way. I think for a lot of us, it can feel quite challenging when we find out that maybe our actions have contributed to something that we did not want to contribute to. I don't want to always be the bringer of bad news. I want to try and show people that the world could be more beautiful if we took these steps, that we're not losing something from our world by asking for sustainable legislation. These aren't unreasonable demands; they make the world a better place for every living being.

I want people to have a good time with less. I think people are constantly chasing commodities, "I need this to be happier," or "I need to buy this to be healthier." But actually, if we could go outside and walk in clean air and swim in clean rivers, lakes, and oceans, we'd have so much more joy and health. The main things that everyone actually needs to thrive are clean air, clean water, good food, and a sense of community, which are unfortunately lacking from our largely transactional society.

(left, descending) *The Wandle at Riverbank Way: Nitrate 5ppm*; *The Wandle at Riverbank Way: Phosphate 0.05ppm*, Textiles, 30 x 20 cm, 2024

Your textile works The Wandle at Riverbank Way: Nitrate & Phosphate are a reflection of your practice focusing heavily on environmental injustices. How do you stay positive?

I think the main thing is forming a robust community with other people who are doing the same thing. I've recently joined an organisation called Friends of the Thames, an umbrella group for anyone who is interested in water conservation in any river that runs into the thames basin. Here, we can share strategies and complaints while keeping each other informed. We've got some amazing experts on board: scientists, artists, campaigners, cold water swimmers, and lawyers for nature, etc. I'm also involved in local groups, too, getting out there and doing anything from litter picking to things like water testing with Earthwatch Europe. With South East Rivers Trust, we'll go on waders and clean the river.

Art can be a lonely pursuit, especially if you're working with an environmental theme. With hand embroidery, it takes a long time to finish a piece. While I'm working, I'm thinking about the things, which would be quite difficult if I didn't have a support system and a social outlet. You can easily get bogged down with activism, but exercising an appreciation for what you are trying to protect is a great way to make a small but meaningful difference.

How does art help you address other areas of your life?

I use art as a form of therapy; a lot of these issues that my art addresses make me feel very angry and powerless, and implementing solutions is in the hands of the very few. You can kick and scream all you want, but a lot of the time, whatever actions you take on social media, it's not going to make much difference. If you email an MP about an issue, you'll often be told that it's something they're already pursuing.

It's really helpful just to be able to sit down, stop doom scrolling, and just stitch. There's something very grounding about hand embroidery because you can only do it at the speed of one person. You're not whizzing away with a sewing machine or computer; you're using the same tools your ancestors had, which allows your mind to focus on what you're doing with intention, while also allowing for deep contemplation and reflection—allowing me to push my work further.

Instagram:
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56 Philip Vaughan-Williams

Philip Vaughan-Williams is a UK-based artist with over twenty-five years of practice. Through his work, he demonstrates his interest in materials and how these can communicate to the viewer. Work manifests as three-dimensional artworks, artists' books, micro zines, postcards, digital photographs, drawings, and mixed media assemblages that often make comments on society, identity, and the geography that is inhabited.

Vaughan-Williams has a history of Mail Art participation and archiving, as well as making installation and performance work on similar themes including political commentry. His work often explores the tensions between the ephemeral and permanence, as well as what is considered beautiful or uncomfortable.

What is something anyone new to your art should know?

I used to draw quite competently. Now, not so much, but I still enjoy the process. I work on an accessible scale, never really anything bigger than A4. I take thousands of photos, mostly on my phone, about three to four thousand a month. I play around with those on freebie apps. Occasionally, I make objects, but always from things that are readily available and affordable. When I was younger, I would make large statement pieces, which I still think were great and took a lot of work. Unfortunately, I remember people implying that I was quite pretentious. I think it was because I wasn't making work that wasn't effortless to grasp.

I now live and work with people who aren't really a part of the art world, which wasn't the case when I was younger. As a result, I want to make stuff that people don't feel intimidated by; I want people to be able to look at a loose self-portrait and think, "That's Phill," and to feel like it's doable, not overwhelming.

Balancing all those paper boats on bamboo sticks in the tossing waves must have been quite a demanding process. What was the experience of constructing this piece like?

This sort of work is more experience-based and quite indulgent on my part. They're also quite an experience for a few unsuspecting passersby, too. I would rock up to the coast with my partner and go to the edge of the sea; I'd plant the bamboo sticks before running in and out of the waves with the paper boats. There's always a fear of not getting the image I want, which makes it a race against time. People walked by, which was an opportunity for a bit of engagement. I'm not looking for it, but I'm glad that it happens. They often ask, "What are you doing?" "What are they?" "You're not littering this place, are you?" After assuring them everything gets removed, there'd be a number of people who would get to that next level, engaging with the message and initiating deeper dialogue.

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

It will probably stay largely the same because I'm comfortable, which I suppose is a dangerous thing, really. When I graduated, I worked in the applied arts realm, which allowed me to make a modest living alongside producing performances, installations, and books. I bowed out of that about fifteen years ago because there were other things I wanted to explore in my life.

I returned to making work a couple of years back when my partner quit his job to pursue art for a living. I wanted to re-enter that world alongside him, but in a way where I had complete control. I don't feel that I'm a professional artist anymore, but I'm in a position where I can support myself and pursue art recreationally without pressure. The big difference now is I'm able to take care of everything that I need without depending on art to make money. Will it change going ahead? I don't know. I think it depends on what life throws at me.

(images) Stills from *Little White Boats*, Paper & Bamboo, 2023

Instagram: @portiphillio

To Investigate:

“The wave on the ground imitates the water. But that’s not entirely true because those patterns are probably made by water. So, it’s not an imitation but an inheritance. Concrete can inherit waves too.”

The concrete ground is warm on the surface from the small amount of sunlight. Underneath, it's cold with a hint of dampness. .

In light, it was partly golden. Out of light, its surface is speckled. The thin grooves built into the slabs, that breaks the ground into small strips, remains deep, almost black.

Slight vertical bumps and indents spread throughout all strips, forming a wavy pattern. With each rise of the concrete, there is a piece of light grey. It becomes ashy on each edge and slightly denser in the middle.

I looked down from a plane to see the ocean once. It was a sunny day, water reflects silver, like aluminum foil, plastic, or porcelain.

I thought the ocean looked static. Waves became lines of whiteness crossing the plain.

I imagined breaking that surface or joining that body. It must be hard. It is true, to fall from the height of a plane into the ocean, water tension would have been like concrete to hit on.

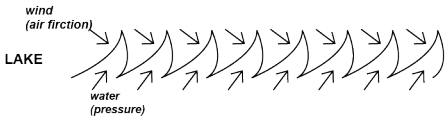
Question one: How to inherit waves from water?

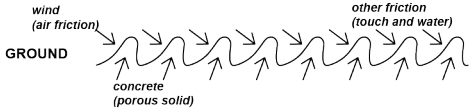
Follow up one:

Concrete is water borne.

Follow up two:

How waves are made:





Comment:

Surface is body.
Shape is shaping.
Revealing.

Question two: Am I an heir?

Follow up one:

My limbs, fingers and toes, each strand of hair. To submerge in water, I extend.

Follow up two:

I’ve mistaken the touch of fluid as softness.

Follow up three:

Body floats in water,
how deep can I go for it to get heavy?

Comment:

How to know...

Catherine Lyu

Catherine Lyu's practice is concept-driven and project-based, through which she explores subject matter rooted in herself and her daily life. She writes, draws, photographs, and moves; she remembers, recalls, and reenacts emotions and sentiments, many related to her daily life, intuitive moments, interpersonal relationships, and Chinese diaspora.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

My first memory of feeling water was before elementary school, nearly drowning in a swimming pool. I remember just the wetness of everything, trying to hold on to the water lines. When I got rescued, I just remember how blue and crowded the swimming pool was. For some reason, it didn't really make me scared that much.

My first memory of seeing the water was on a plane, and I saw the ocean from above for the first time. It was a sunny day, and just so bright. At the time I hadn't really thought of seeing water from the sky, and it was quite shocking to see—just a vast expanse of water. My newest obsession with water has to be Lake Michigan in Chicago.

(left) *To Investigate:*, Writing, 2025

Instagram: @cath3rine_lv
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What is something anyone new to your art should know?

A lot of my work is slow and quiet. The audience doesn't need to know that, but I do wish there was a little bit of patience when first encountering my work. I'm interested in education, and how we learn to perceive art. Understanding art is kind of like a muscle in your brain that you need to practice. On the other hand, younger students will go into galleries with super imagination and enthusiasm, only to be dismissed by an adult for "Not grasping the message." Which is often the only way they understand teaching art analysis. So yes, practice! But also, don't teach what something means.

Your artistic practice draws from a broad range of techniques and mediums. How do you envision your work existing in the public realm?

It's a weird thing to think about the public realm. When you're in education, showing work feels public in a way that's in a protected, enclosed community. The environment is low-stakes because it's just your peers and friends. I also feel like the idea of the public realm to me really is just any realm that's not private. i.e. Not in my head, notebook, or studio, for example. If I were to open my studio, it would become a public realm. So it really depends on what medium that work is in, and just following my intuition. I'm really interested in educational spaces like public libraries or K-12 schools, where people can also see my work for free, that's what I wish for the most.

60 Ben Bucki

Ben Bucki is a photographer, model maker, writer, and illustrative artist who has produced and written work for numerous magazines in the model and railway trade. Alongside his extensive photography practice, he contributes to and organises a large number of exhibitions, group shows, and open calls.

> ***"There's something satisfying in taking overlooked, brightly coloured playthings and using them to create bright, colourful, artistic shots. On top of that, there's something to be said about creating art and lasting images using toys that are often treated as largely disposable by many people, transitory playthings enjoyed for a few hours on the beach or the pool before being abandoned, burst, or thrown away."***

What does an average day of art practice look like for you?

It depends on the day job, but I tend to fit in doing artwork around my shifts at the hospital, mainly working in the evenings after we've sat down to tea. In a way it's nice though; a bit of family time, then a couple of hours of shooting photographs, editing pics, making things... it helps me to decompress a bit.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

Childhood trips to the seaside in Wales; paddling in the sea off Harlech. It's had a big effect on my practice, warm and happy memories of trips to the seaside, which I was determined to give my foster daughters the same chance to experience. Quite a lot of my projects, such as *Inflate-Deflate*, have strong themes of holidays and the sea.

(images, from left to right) *Inflate-Deflate Underwater Rainbow*; *Inflate-Deflate Underwater Blue Stripes*, Photography, 2015

Does 2025 symbolise any significant changes for your art practice?

We've moved to a new house, and there's finally room for a permanent workshop area. As a family, we've been limited to one end of a kitchen table for a long time. Suddenly, there's going to be room for a work table, my laser cutter, maybe even a kiln! Hopefully, I can return to making more experimental 3D work, something I've not been able to do for a while.

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Instagram:
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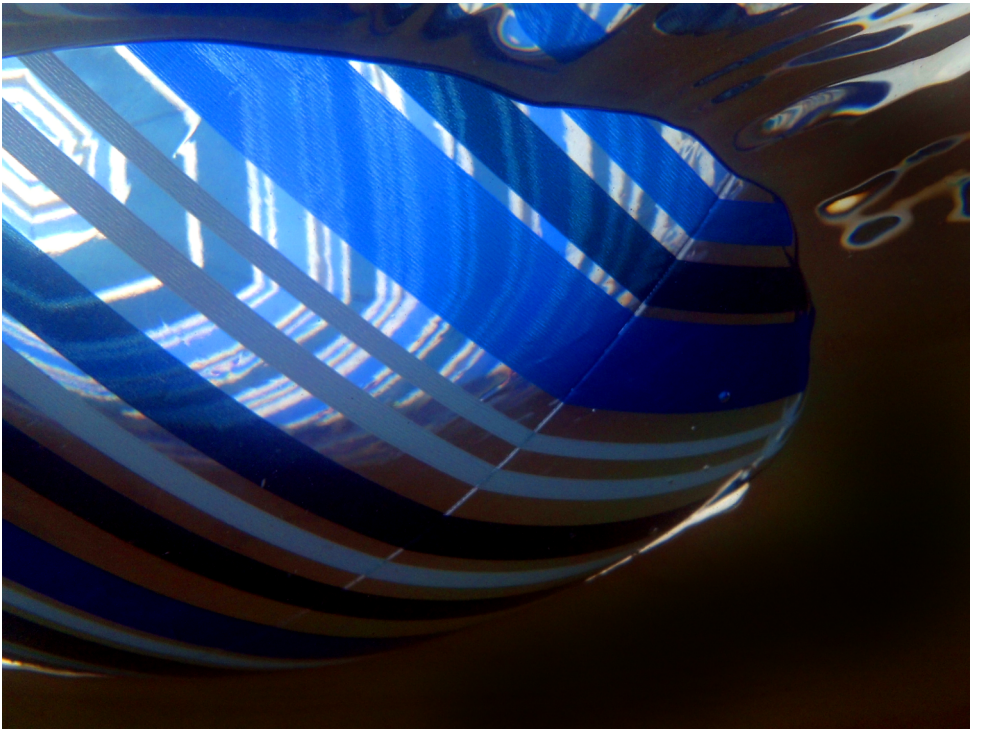

62 Issie Martin

Issie Martin's practice investigates her relationship with bodies of water and the uncertainty of eroding coastlines in a time of ecological crisis—specifically in relation to her home on the East Kent coast. Her current work explores satirical *Futile Acts* in the face of a changing climate, using site-specific materials as tools to save the land and prevent flooding.

Influenced by Astrida Neimanis' hydrofeminism, a theory that reimagines the human as a body of water entangled in the global water cycle, she combines drawings, etchings, and sculptural tools with moving images, viewing the shoreline as a site of exchange.

(above) *Chalk Bucket Remnants*, Photograph, 2024

Watch: youtube.com/watch?v=dPG5X-EDYqs&t=7s

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

The house I grew up in is opposite a tidal river and near to the sea. Throughout my childhood, we would often look out the window and say, "The river's high today." When applying to university, I hadn't considered the importance of bodies of water in my daily life. The distance from any large body of water became prominent throughout my work.

I often consider my home and the potential risk of flooding. In the future, it is quite likely my house could be underwater, and the idea of telling my children that my past home is now under the river is quite surreal. Thinking about bodies of water fuels my creative practice, and in the future, I want to live close to a body of water again.

Chalk Bucket Remnants strikes me as a piece where there was little room for error. What sort of preparations did you make before heading for the water? And is there anything you would do differently in hindsight?

I made the bucket in my studio in Loughborough, planning to transport it home via train. Unfortunately, the bucket broke before even leaving the studio due to it being so fragile. Having rebuilt the bucket, the plan was to walk along sections of the coastline from Sandwich Bay to St. Margaret's Bay—where the performance took place. Fearing the bucket could shatter at any point, each movement became very tentative.

Once reaching the sea with the bucket fully intact, I began scooping the water. Despite envisaging an extended collection and displacement of water, the bucket deteriorated and eroded rapidly. In the end, this act simply reflected the ephemerality of my home coastline.

How does art help you address other areas of your life?

It helps when reflecting on and understanding my position on vast global issues. I went through a period of time when even making artwork seemed futile and just a waste of materials—thinking, "Nothing's going to make a difference." Yet, making continued to be a way to understand this sense of hopelessness.

(below) *Entanglements*, Blue Pencil on Paper, 21 x 15 cm, 2025

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StudioLalli

Amritpal Riat, aka StudioLalli, is an abstract artist based in Leeds, UK. Deriving inspiration from the Yorkshire countryside and her years in New Zealand, she produces large-scale landscapes, life drawings, and murals.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

In New Zealand, through swimming in lakes and the sea, I found a whole new sense of scale and immersion. You're tiny in this vast, powerful expanse of water. Being able to do this frequently gave me a sense of perspective about my place in life and the universe. It's grounding.

How do you wish your art to be perceived? And how does that compare to reality?

I want the abstract nature of my art to be enjoyable for its different facets—you can look into it with as much depth as you want; the different shades, hues, patterns, and forms that are going on. You can visualise it however you please while appreciating the natural beauty and power I try to convey. I want the circular shape in combination with the encaustic medium to be seen as both unique and unusual. I try to utilise the things around me, the weather, climate, and local geography, but I fear I may be asking too much of a viewer to recognise certain materials or influences. I hope to capture the viewer, and perhaps inform them of the significance of my choices should they wish to know more.

Your portfolio contains an extensive range of abstract paintings. Has this always been your preferred way of working, or were there various stopping points along the way?

My circumstances and influences have shaped my art. It's been fun to develop and explore different styles and skills. I've moved around a lot, so my art has had to adapt to various environments too. Abstract has really fit for me over the last few years, which started in New Zealand during lockdown. Forced to stay put, and I had the space to gather a wide range of materials, boards, canvases, and even scrap pieces of wood. In doing so, I had to re-learn paint, colour, and how I like to work. That's how I developed the larger abstracts; I could easily recognise what I liked about them: they're imposing, compelling, and can be enjoyed on multiple levels.

(above) *Fervour*, Encaustic Paints on Wood, 100 x 100 cm, 2021

Instagram: @studiolalli_art
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(left) *Unidentified Submersible Objects (Aqua)*, Acrylic on Canvas, 45 x 56 cm, 2023

66 Andree Adley

Andree Adley is a Kent-based artist who studied BA Hons at Saint Martins School of Art. Through her paintings and sculptures, she explores freedom and privacy, in relation to how it is being gradually eroded.

What does an average day of art practice look like for you?

The day begins with breakfast with my cat, usually followed by some Yoga before I drive to my studio. After ascending a mountain of stairs, I arrive at my studio—being surrounded by work with the radio playing is always hugely inspiring. I usually have two or three painting or scuptures in rotation, prioritising any that are to be exhibited soon. I will work on these for the rest of the day, broken up by a treasure hunt at the charity shop on the street below.

What is your earliest or most significant memory of water?

I remember watering the very pretty and colourful flowers in my Nanny's garden when I was very little. When everything was in bloom I had my own plastic watering can which was yellow with an orange flower shaped spout. It was also here where I did my first drawings and paintings.

What space does your art occupy in contemporary art?

In contemporary art, I try to portray myself as a protagonist and disruptor. I make spaces that exhibit art with my pop up art gallery *The Secret Salon*, showcasing work from artists at the cutting edge of what is happening now, shaking things up with remarkable and boundary pushing works.

What is your favourite medium, and why?

Everything I make mostly uses recycled or unwanted materials and found objects that would otherwise go to landfill. As an artist, I believe it is more important than ever to be ecologically conscious.

(right) *Unidentified Submersible Objects (Fuchsia)*, Acrylic on Canvas, 45 x 56 cm, 2023

Instagram: @andreeadleyartist / @the_secretsalon_

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Wiro Mag: Aqua (2025)

SU4IP [Suburban Utopia, An Infertile Place], Sheffield

Wiro Mag: Aqua is a compilation of text and images provided by each respective participating artist. Similar materials may exist elsewhere and are not entirely exclusive to this publication.

Designed & Produced by Lyndon Watkinson

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First Edition (March 2025)

About the Author

Lyndon Watkinson (1999) is an artist, designer, writer, and musician based in Sheffield, UK. Democratising art and art context through artworks, publications, graphic design, articles, and sound. Creative director and founder of the online arts organisation SU4IP. His work is characterised by a desire for precision, often depicting aesthetics that celebrate and criticise the absurdity of corporatized identity, calling into question the necessity of creating false exteriors when what is not seen is often just as important.

In late 2020, a blog post entitled Suburban Utopia, An Infertile Place formed part of the wider inquiry and development of his practice for his bachelor's degree in fine art. As his work matured, he applied this term as a formalisation of his creative endeavours, later abbreviating it to SU4IP, now used as a digital alias and publishing entity.

Wiro Mag

Wiro Mag is an ongoing series of publications that seeks to capture art practice in motion, using books as a format to make engaging with art easier, more open, and portable. These paper-bound galleries are designed to allow for greater connection between the reader and each artist, with emphasis on providing deeper context surrounding each work and the intention behind it.

Through both occupying and subverting traditional gallery spaces, these editions are aimed at both experienced art enthusiasts and those who feel less informed on contemporary art.

Instagram: @lyndonwatkinson
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Not just about water.

Wiro Mag: Aqua brings together the work of thirty-one artists from around the world, underpinned by the theme of water. Inside, you will find thirty double-page spreads featuring a curated selection of works, alongside a bio and Q&A section from each artist.

Through this edition, the significance of water in all aspects of our daily lives bubbles through to the surface, reflecting on various issues, themes, ideas, and compositions. Furthermore, the capacity for art to convey these in a way that is both beautiful and informative ripples through each page.